

Test drive your new career

By [Jay MacDonald](#) • Bankrate.com

You wouldn't buy a new car without a test drive, right? So why would you bail on your boring day job and dive headlong into your dream job without trying it out first?

Sure, getting a real feel for a potential new job while hanging onto your existing one is tricky. It also can be costly. And it definitely requires some sacrifice and commitment (remember, we're still talking work here). But when you're considering such a major change, the effort could pay off in the long run.

Options range from hiring a personal career coach to taking a sabbatical from your current job to try out a new one. You can even take a literal working vacation to explore career options.

Joel Garfinkle, a self-proclaimed [dream job coach](#), says 98 percent of us wouldn't know our dream job if it pounced on us. "Most people spend their career doing what they're good at, what they excel at, and suddenly in their early 40s they wake up and go, 'OK, I've done what I'm good at, now let me go try what would be fulfilling.'"

That awakening may be coming earlier these days, Garfinkle says.

"The average 32-year-old has held nine full- or part-time jobs, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. Today, there is a lot of job changing and experimentation going on."

Garfinkle maintains we each know inside what we want to do; it's societal pressures, expectations and fear that keep us from pursuing it. Trying out a job in a safe setting can help break through that debris.

"You get to experience it," he says. "The thing that's missing for some of my clients is, they haven't tasted it yet. The more you can taste it, feel it, experience it, the more you're going to want to make it happen."

"Once you experience your dream job, it allows you to be your true self all the time, it fits into your life comfortably, naturally. It incorporates your values and it gives you energy instead of draining you."

True working vacations

Brian Kurth has tapped into today's pervasive career zeitgeist with [Vocation Vacations](#). With a little planning, his company helps searching workers spend a vacation trying out a dream job without tipping off existing bosses.

Does giving up your hard-earned leisure time sound crazy? Maybe, but consider how many people already stay tied to their jobs 24-7 courtesy of ubiquitous e-mail and text messaging via laptops and PDAs. The next short step is transferring your existing working vacation energy into a job holiday that could lead to a more fulfilling career.

Kurth, founder and chief executive dreamer of Vocation Vacations, was stuck in commuter traffic on Chicago's Kennedy Expressway several years ago when the light bulb went on: If he was whiling away his daily monoxide moments dreaming of a better life, surely his fellow commuters must be doing the same.

"I used to daydream about working in the wine industry, working with dogs

